DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 306 SP 038 098

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TITLE Teacher Behaviors That Affect Discipline Referrals and Off-Task Behaviors.
PUB DATE 1998-06-06
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at the Annual Research Colloquium at the State University of West Georgia (4th, Carrollton, GA, June 6, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; *Discipline Problems; Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; Elementary School Teachers; Positive Reinforcement; *Referral; *Student Behavior; *Teacher Behavior

ABSTRACT

This study collected information regarding the direct and indirect management techniques employed by elementary teachers to control inappropriate student behavior and its relationship to discipline referral rates. The study also examined whether effective management techniques affected student on-task rates. A group of 270 elementary school students and 12 of their elementary school teachers from a suburban elementary school participated. Discipline referral rates were tabulated for each teacher covering August 1997 through January 1998. Each teacher was observed four times. The observers used an on-task/off-task checklist and a direct and indirect disciplines checklist to collect the data. The study compared teachers having high referral rates with teachers having low referral rates. Data analysis indicated that teachers who used positive direct or indirect discipline techniques created a positive and effective relationship with students, which in turn resulted in higher on-task behaviors. There was not a significant difference in the use of direct discipline techniques for teachers with high referral rates versus those with low referral rates. (Contains 33 references.) (SM)

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ED 422 306

TEACHER BEHAVIORS

TEACHER BEHAVIORS THAT AFFECT DISCIPLINE REFERRALS AND OFF-TASK BEHAVIORS

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*Action research paper presented at the 4th Annual Research Colloquium at the State Universtiy of West Georgia on June 6, 1998

SP038098

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ABSTRACT

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM/PURPOSE

Classroom management styles vary from teacher to teacher. The purpose of this study was to collect information regarding the direct and indirect management techniques employed by teachers to control inappropriate behavior and its relationship to discipline referral rates. A second purpose was to investigate whether effective management techniques affected student on-task rates.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study of teacher behaviors which affect discipline referrals might contribute to a greater understanding of expertise in handling discipline problems. If teachers using indirect or direct discipline techniques are more successful in handling the classroom environment, these differences might provide insights into the thought and actions that underlie successful classroom management.

EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Receiving a number of discipline referrals from a single classroom indicates that a classroom management plan is ineffective. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to manage their classrooms successfully. This will enable teachers to guide student's behavior in such a way that they will internalize expectations and develop the self-control they need to function securely in life. If classroom practices that foster disruptive behavior can be identified and changed, teachers will not only benefit from better classroom control, but society as well.

PROCEDURES

Discipline referral rates were tabulated for each teacher covering the months of August through January, 1997-98. Teachers with high referral rates were compared with teachers with low referrals for grade levels first, second, and third. High referral rates consisted of having more than 15 referrals while low referral rates consisted of having less than 3 referrals.

The teachers in the study were observed a total of four times. The first observation consisted of a 45 minute observation in which the checklist for direct and indirect management techniques was used. The next three observations systematically examined the behavior of each student for a few seconds in order to determine whether the student was on-task or off-task. A sweep of the classroom was made at 2 minute intervals for the duration of the 20 minute observation. All observations occurred between 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. during the months of March and April.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the hypotheses were analyzed using the t-test for independent groups to determine if any differences were significant at the .05 level.

RESULTS

There was not a significant difference in the use of direct discipline techniques for teachers with high referral rates versus those with low referral rates. Consequently, there was not a significant difference in the use of indirect discipline techniques for teachers with low referral rates versus those with high referral rates. However, teachers who used a higher percentage of indirect discipline techniques had 62% of their students on-task while teachers who used direct discipline techniques had only 38% of their students on-task.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

Teachers that used positive direct or indirect discipline techniques created a positive and effective relationship with students, which in turn resulted in higher on-task behaviors. Further studies with a larger number of teachers need to be conducted to determine if there would be a significant difference in the use of indirect discipline techniques for teachers with low referral rates versus those with high referral rates.

Introduction

Discipline is either at the top or near the top of most polls conducted concerning public education. Phi Delta Kappa has sponsored a yearly Gallop Poll of the public's attitudes toward education since 1969. One question on the survey asks: "What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools of this community must contend?" The public has consistently listed discipline at or near the top of its concerns (Elam, Rose, and Gallop, 1994).

The concern about discipline is not declining, but is growing year by year. Discipline is one of the top three reasons new teachers leave the profession and discipline problems are often listed by teachers as a major source of burnout (Alderman, 1991; Freiberg and Stein, 1995). Discipline is intended to suppress and redirect misbehavior. Teachers know that students sometimes behave with consideration, helpfulness, and honesty. This makes teaching one of the most satisfying of all professions. Teachers also know students behave at times with hostility, disrespect, and cruelty, all of which damage the environment for learning. The goal of discipline is to reduce the need for teacher intervention by helping students learn to control their own behavior. Teachers apply various discipline techniques, hoping that students will internalize self-discipline and display it in the classroom. How they apply these discipline techniques can determine their effectiveness in the classroom (Alderman, 1996).

Purpose of the Study

Classroom management styles vary from teacher to teacher. The purpose of this study was to collect information regarding the direct and indirect management techniques

employed by teachers to control inappropriate behavior and its relationship to high discipline referral rates. A second purpose was to investigate whether effective management techniques affected high student on-task rates. Two checklists concerning direct and indirect discipline techniques and student on-task, off-task behaviors were developed to use while observing the individual teachers classroom.

Definitions

Direct management technique - When a teacher verbally or non-verbally attempts to control a student's behavior.

Indirect management technique - When a teacher verbally or non-verbally allows a student an opportunity to control their own behavior.

Discipline referral rates - The number of times a teacher refers students to the office for inappropriate behavior.

On-task behavior - Behavior that is appropriate to the task at hand such as listening, writing, discussing, reading, or participating in a hands-on activity.

Off-task behavior - Behavior that is inappropriate to the task at hand such as doing work for another class, sleeping, disturbing others, playing, day dreaming, or talking and listening to other students.

Significance of the Study

Receiving a number of discipline referrals from a single classroom indicates that a classroom management plan is ineffective (McGinnis, 1995). Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to manage their classrooms successfully. This will enable teachers to guide student's behavior in such a way that they will internalize expectations and develop the self-control that they need to function securely in life. Research has shown that disruptive behavior not only confronts schools and society with a

serious challenge, but it also has an adverse effect on individuals (Nelson, 1996). Aggressiveness and violence in adults are associated with children with behavior problems in elementary school. A longitudinal Swedish study of early aggressive behavior by Stattin and Magnusson (1989) concluded that early aggressiveness in children seemed to be associated with criminal activity in youth at about the same level as for criminal activity in adulthood. Another longitudinal study conducted by Franklin (1991) found that individuals in a group of nearly 600 children between the ages of 8 and 30 years who had behavior problems in elementary school were 5 times more likely than their less belligerent classmates to have been convicted of crimes by age 30. If classroom practices that foster disruptive behavior can be identified and changed, teachers will not only benefit from better classroom control, but society as well.

Theoretical Framework

It was hoped that this study of teacher behaviors which affect discipline referrals might contribute to a greater understanding of expertise in handling discipline problems. If teachers using indirect or direct discipline techniques are more successful in handling the classroom environment, these differences might provide insights into the thought and actions that underlie successful classroom management.

Review of Literature

Literature was reviewed on behavior management systems and effective and ineffective discipline strategies. The literature on behavior management will be addressed first, followed by research on effective and ineffective discipline strategies. Hopefully, this will give the reader a better understanding of teacher behaviors that affect discipline referrals.

There are many discipline approaches or models available for teachers to deal with misbehaving children. Basically, there are three approaches to classroom management - noninterventionist, interactionalists and interventionist. These approaches progress along a continuum from minimum to maximum use of power by the teacher (Martin & Baldwin, 1996). The following is a summary of behavior management models representing the three approaches to classroom management.

Noninterventionist - Gordon's (1993) Teacher Effectiveness Training

The noninterventionists presupposes that the student has an inner drive that needs to find its expression in the real world. Proponents of Gordon's Teacher Effectiveness Training are considered noninterventionist (Martin & Baldwin, 1996). This model is based on the theoretical underpinnings of Carl Rogers' client-centered therapy in which the counselor takes an empathic, nonjudgmental position. The basic assumption to this behavior management system is that the child is motivated by an internal desire to be good. Behavior management based on reward and punishment is shunned and in its place proposes noncontrolling alternatives for influencing, not forcing, student behavior (Charles, 1996).

Devoting much time to helping teachers communicate more effectively with students, Gordon (1993) prescribed specific teacher actions and methods that can be employed to develop a warm, accepting relationship between a teacher and students and the subsequent need to help students acquire healthy, positive self-concepts. Overt teacher behaviors such as critical listening, acknowledgment responses, door openers, active listening and I-messages are techniques used to help a student verbally reflect on his or her emotions and behavior (Wolfgang, 1995; Charles, 1996).

Covert teacher behaviors such as "no-lose" or Method II problem solving techniques and the six-problem-solving steps based on the scientific method of problem-solving as devised by John Dewey to resolve conflict in a democratic manner are also used by the teacher. Method II is a conflict-resolving approach that involves the teacher and students working together to reflectively solve conflicts. Gordon (1993) believes no resentment is generated using this technique, motivation is improved and creative thinking is promoted. The six problem-solving steps consists of the following: (1) defining the problem; (2) generating possible solutions; (3) evaluating the solutions; (4) deciding which situation is best; (5) determining how to implement the decision; and (6) assessing how well the solution solved the problem. These covert techniques free the teacher and student from the common outcome of disciplinary actions where one party loses and feels inferior while the other wins and feels superior (Rich, 1985). Thomas Gordon believes student misbehavior is the result of obstacles that block the full expression of rational thought. The goal in Teacher Effectiveness Training is to remove those obstacles (Rich, 1985; Wolfgang, 1995; Charles, 1996).

Interactionalist - Dreikurs's (1968) Social Discipline Model

Theories developed by Rudoph Driekurs (1968) and William Glasser (1992) provided the framework for the interactionalist approach (Wolfgang, 1995). Interactionalists find solutions satisfactory to both teacher and students, using some of the same techniques as noninterventionists and interventionists (Martin & Baldwin, 1996). Driekurs' Social Discipline Model (1968) is an example of classroom management based on the interactionalist thought.

There are two main thrusts to Dreikurs's Social Discipline Model (1968). The first focuses on establishing a democratic classroom and teaching style to help students acquire a sense of belonging. The second thrust focuses on identifying and dealing with mistaken goals that students pursue when unable to attain their genuine goal of belonging.

Dreikurs' believes discipline in the classroom is best accomplished when both teachers and students set limits on behavior. Thus, students participate in clarifying the kinds of behavior that will best promote the interests of the class as well as taking part in deciding what the consequences should be when behavior agreements are broken. It is stressed that students are responsible for their own action; students must respect themselves and others; and that students are responsible for helping formulate rules and consequences in their classrooms and for abiding by them.

There are six basic assumptions in Dreikurs' model: (1) people are social beings and desire to belong; (2) people are decision making organisms; (3) all behavior is purposeful and directed toward social goals; (4) people do not see reality as it is, but only as they perceive it to be; (5) a person cannot be understood by some particular characteristics; and (6) misbehavior is the result of faulty reasoning on how to gain social recognition (Wolfgang, 1995; Charles, 1996).

According to Dreikurs (1968), students misbehave for one or more of the following reasons: attention getting; power seeking; revenge; or display of inadequacy. Covert teaching behaviors that can prevent these misbehaviors involve observing and collecting information about the student by silently looking on. This is followed by the teacher's analysis of his or her own feelings toward the student's misbehavior. If the teacher feels annoyed, the student is probably seeking attention. If the teacher feels threatened, the student is probably seeking power. If the teacher feels hurt, the student is probably seeking revenge. If the teacher feels powerless, the student is probably displaying inadequacy.

Overt teacher behaviors can include confrontation and applying appropriate corrective procedures; engaging a student in friendly conversation, disclosing and confirming mistaken goals to the student; conducting weekly scheduled class group discussion about all types of behavior; continued encouragement to increase the student's confidence, avoiding criticism so true motives can be learned and behavior corrected; and using encouragement techniques. These techniques include work for improvement, not perfection; commend efforts, separate the deed from the doer; build on the students strengths, not weakness; and show faith in the student. Mistakes should not be viewed as failures. Logical consequences are also developed. Logical consequences are reasonable results that follow behavior. Good behavior brings pleasant consequences such as extra play time or being allowed to talk to a friend for a period of time. Misbehavior brings unpleasant consequences such as having to complete work at home that was supposed to be completed in class (Rich, 1985: Wolfgang, 1995; Charles, 1996).

While emphasis on mutual respect, encouragement, student effort and general responsibility are considered important to teachers, some-what unclear is how to implement the ideas. Teachers may not be able to determine a student's true goal, some children refuse to talk about misbehavior, and at times it can be hard to determine consequences (Wolfgang, 1995; Charles, 1996).

Interventionists - Canter's (1976) Assertive Discipline

The interventionists emphasize what the environment does to shape student development. Traditional behavior modification provide the foundation for this school of thought (Martin & Baldwin, 1996). Lee and Marlene Canter's Assertive Discipline is an example of interventionist ideology (Wolfgang, 1995; Charles, 1996).

Lee and Marlene Canter conducted research on teachers who effectively handled discipline in their classroom and, after testing their system, devised a model of assertive discipline in the late 70's (Canter, 1976). During the past twenty years the model has been used, the Canters' obtained feedback from educators thus enabling the program to evolve to meet the needs of today's students. There are five basic changes to the original assertive disciple model. First, there is a sharper distinction between rules and directions. Rules are in effect at the time, while directions vary according to the activity. Second, the teacher needs to distinguish between disruptive and non-disruptive off-task behavior. If a student is not paying attention but is not bothering anyone, there's no need to impose consequences. The teacher only needs to redirect the behavior. Third, teachers need to emphasize positive strategies for keeping students on-task. Fourth, the consequence should be kept to a minimum. The key to effective consequences is consistency, not severity. Finally, behavior should be tracked in a private way. Public reprimands may humiliate some students. leading to more misbehavior (Canter, 1996). The underlying premise of the Assertive Discipline in the 90's shows teachers how to take charge responsibly in the classroom and establish a climate where needs are met, behavior is managed humanely, and learning occurs as needed. This is accomplished by focusing on student needs, establishing clear classroom rules, teaching students appropriate behavior, giving students positive attention, talking helpfully with students who misbehave, and invoking consequences as a last resort (Charles, 1996; Canter, 1996).

Five steps are used to implement assertive discipline (Wolfgang, 1995; Charles, 1996). The first step is to eliminate obstacles to assertive behavior. This requires teachers to rid themselves of negative expectations about students. Teachers need to replace these negative expectations with positive ones. Expecting less appropriate behavior from some students because they cannot behave is a self-defeating prophecy.

The second step is to practice the use of assertive behavior. Teachers determine the differences among assertive, nonassertive and hostile behavior. Teachers practice the assertive style until it becomes a natural part of their behavior. The assertive response indicates the teacher's disapproval in a firm, unemotional, businesslike way and informs the students what they are expected to do. Teachers do not condemn, scold, threaten or blame, nor do they ignore misbehavior or plead with students to act properly. Overt teacher behavior using a "broken record" response when students fail to comply by reiterating the statement may be used until the students take cognizance of it and correct their behavior.

The third step is to set limits. Teachers analyze the activities students will be involved in during the day and the types of behavior expected in these activities. Overt teacher behaviors such as giving hints to alert students that there is a problem with their behavior, giving I-messages, questions and demands are used to set limits.

The fourth step is to follow through on limits previously set. The consequences for inappropriate behavior are established in advance and the teacher follows through with the appropriate consequence. Punishments for inappropriate behavior, such as loss of privilege, detention, or referral to the principal can be used. The consequences should be acceptable to the teacher and disagreeable to the student, and should be applied immediately after the undesirable behavior.

The last step involves implementing a system of rewards for positive behaviors. Rewards can include positive notes to students and parents, token coupons, or calling on a student.

Each of the behavior management systems discussed have a fairly narrow and differing view of what motivates students and their misbehavior, and each prescribes various techniques for dealing with this. Teachers believe and act according to all three paradigms of discipline, but one usually predominates in beliefs and actions (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986; Wolfgang, 1995; Martin & Baldwin, 1996). Research does not indicate one behavior management system is superior to the others (Wolfgang, 1995). However, recent analyses of teaching have suggested that effective teachers, in contrast to less effective colleagues, follow certain strategies in order to have an effective classroom management plan.

Effective and Ineffective Teacher Strategies

Teachers who are effective classroom managers use the following strategies:

(1) prevent problems by implementing and communicating expectations through classroom rules and procedures at the beginning of the year;

(2) consistently follows through with appropriate consequences if the rules are broken;

(3) use time as effectively as possible;

(4) implement group strategies with high levels of involvement and low levels of misbehavior;

(5) choose lesson formats and academic tasks conducive to high student engagement (Long & Fry, 1985; Harris, 1991; Evertson & Harris, 1992; Fuhr, 1993; Jones & Jones, 1995; Meadows & Melloy, 1996; Alderman, 1997);

(6) systematically monitor student academic work and behavior, better known as "withitness" (Kounin, 1970; Long & Frye, 1985; Evertson & Harris, 1992);

(7) provide feedback about academic performance and behavior;

(8) use effective seatwork practices (Evertson & Harris, 1992; Nelson, 1996; Alderman, 1997);

(9) interpret the meaning of classroom events and act on these understandings to keep order (Good & Brophy, 1987; Brophy, 1988; Carter, Cushing, Subers, Stein & Berliner, 1988; McGinnis, Frederick & Edwards, 1995; Nelson, 1996; Alderman, 1997);

(10) rules are brief and specific, stated positively when possible, and limited in number to five or six important rules (Fuhr, 1993; McGinnis, Freferick, & Edwards, 1995; Nelson, 1996; Alderman, 1997);

(11) consistently reinforce appropriate behavior, maintain positive teacher-student relationships, and function as role models for their students (Fuhr, 1993; Almeida, 1995; Meadows & Melloy, 1996; Nelson, 1996);

(12) rarely use direct discipline techniques such as yelling, sarcasm, or resorting to the use of corporal punishment;

(13) use indirect techniques such as smiling, praising, and complimenting in fostering desirable behavior (Chemlynaski, 1996; Alderman, 1997);

(14) use discipline to motivate the student to avoid negative behavior, not something to crush the student (Fuhr, 19930;

(15) avoid mass punishment;

(16) punishment is used sparingly since the more often it is used, the less effective it becomes;

(17) punishment never constitutes retaliation; and

(18) subject matter is not used as punishment (Chemlynski, 1996; Alderman, 1997).

Teachers who are ineffective managers use the following strategies:

(1) talk excessively to the student who has committed an infraction thereby making the student express himself in a confrontive fashion in order to protect his image with his peers;

(2) discipline according to their emotions rather than toward the goal of either preventing or de-escalating a problem;

(3) argue with students;

(4) use passive teacher behaviors such as sitting behind the desk constantly, being too tolerant and too forgiving, pleading with students, having ambiguous expectations, and hesitancy to set limits;

(5) have poor transition procedures;

(6) use coercive motivation techniques such as threats;

(7) assert their authority inconsistently, weakly, or apologetically (Fuhr, 1993; Meadows & Melloy, 1996; Almeida, 1995); and

(8) lack self control, resorting to yelling, sarcasm and intimidation in controlling students (Alderman, 1992; Alderman, 1996).

The literature review on discipline is quite cumbersome and detailed. Discipline technique strategies are classified as effective or ineffective, interventionist or non-interventionist. Another way of looking at discipline techniques could be to classify them as direct or indirect. Direct discipline techniques include yelling at the student, ripping up papers and/or work of the student, and sarcasm. Teachers attempt to control a student's behavior when using direct discipline techniques. When a teacher verbally or non-verbally allows a student an opportunity to control their own behavior, indirect discipline techniques are used. Examples of indirect discipline techniques include

stating a rule that is being broken and allowing the student to follow the rule; walking close to a student who is misbehaving; and looking at a student without saying anything.

On the basis of existing research on behavior management systems and effective teaching strategies, the following hypotheses were formulated:

(1) teachers with high discipline referral rates will use more direct discipline techniques;

(2) teachers with low discipline referral rates will use more indirect discipline techniques;

(3) teachers who use a higher percentage of indirect discipline techniques will have more students on-task than teachers who use direct discipline techniques.

Methodology

Subjects

The elementary school involved in this study was located in a suburban area near Atlanta, Georgia. The socio-economic backgrounds of the students ranged from public housing to apartments to upper-middle class. The school served approximately 850 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth. The student population was 99.5% African-American and 0.2% Caucasian. A total of 270 students were involved in the study; 103 in the first grade, 88 in the second, and 79 in the third grade. The faculty population involved in the study consisted of 12 teachers, four from each grade level first through third.

Instrumentation

Two checklists concerning direct and indirect discipline techniques and student on-task, off-task behaviors were developed to use while observing the individual teachers classroom. The checklist for direct and indirect discipline techniques included classroom

management procedures commonly reported in literature. The lists consisted of potential responses to inappropriate as well as appropriate behavior (see Table 1).

The on-task, off-task checklist involved creating a legend to represent at-task behavior and each type of inappropriate behavior observed (see Table 2). A diagram resembling the seating patterns of the students was constructed for each classroom.

The independent variable was the difference in discipline techniques used by each teacher. The dependent variables were the referral rates of the teachers and the on and off-task behaviors of the students.

Procedures

Discipline referral rates were tabulated for each teacher covering the months of August through January, 1997-98. Teachers with high referral rates were compared with teachers with low referrals for grade levels first, second and third. High referral rates consisted of having more than 15 referrals while low referral rates consisted of having less than 3 referrals.

The teachers in the study were observed a total of four times. At the start of an observation session , the observer entered the room during a natural break in the daily routine so as not to be disruptive. To minimize the intrusiveness, little eye contact was made with either the teacher or the students. The observer sat quietly in the back of the classroom. The first observation consisted of a 45 minute observation in which the checklist for direct and indirect management techniques was used (see Appendix A). The next three observations systematically examined the behavior of each student for a few seconds in order to determine whether the student was on-task or off-task. A sweep of the classroom was made at 2 minute intervals for the duration of the 20 minute observation, using the same letter legend to indicate observed behavior but changing the number to indicate the sequence of observations. For example, 4A in a box indicated that

the student was off-task during the supervisor's fourth observation. All observations occurred between 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. during the months of March and April. If there were 20 students and 10 sweeps, there was a possibility of having 200 off-task behaviors. The actual number of off-task behaviors were divided by the number of possible off-task behaviors to determine the percentage of off-task behaviors.

Data Analysis

The data for hypotheses one through three were analyzed using the t-test for independent groups to determine if any differences were significant at the .05 level.

Results

The use of direct discipline techniques was analyzed by comparing the number of direct discipline techniques of high referral and low referral rate teachers. The mean for direct discipline techniques for teachers with high referral rates was 9.0 with a standard deviation of 4.32. The mean for direct discipline techniques for teachers with low referral rates was 7.0 with a standard deviation of 3.215. The t-value was equal to -0.83 with a p-value of 0.4257 (see table #1). Hypothesis 1 was not supported. There was not a significant difference in the use of direct discipline techniques for teachers with high referral rates versus those with low referral rates.

Table #1

A Comparison of Direct Discipline Techniques Used by Teachers with High Referral and Low Referral Rates

	M	SD	N	t-score	p
Teachers with High Referral Rates	9.00	4.32	6	-0.830	.426
Teachers with Low Referral Rates	7.00	3.22	6		

$p > .05$

The use of indirect discipline techniques was analyzed by comparing the number of indirect discipline techniques of high referral and low referral rate teachers. The mean for indirect discipline techniques for teachers with high referral rates was 10.50 with a standard deviation of 3.99. The mean for indirect discipline techniques for teachers with low referral rates was 12.50 with a standard deviation of 4.349. The t-value was 0.758 with a p-value of 0.4661 (see table #2). Consequently, hypotheses 2 was not supported. There was not a significant difference in the use of indirect discipline techniques for teachers with low referral rates versus those with high referral rates.

Table #2

A Comparison of Indirect Discipline Techniques Used by Teachers with High Referral and Low Referral Rates

	M	SD	N	t-score	p
Teachers with High Referral Rates	10.5	3.99	6	.758	.466
Teachers with Low Referral Rates	12.5	4.35	6		

$p > .05$

The number of off-task behaviors were compared with high referral and low referral rate teachers. Students who did not have any off-task behaviors were assigned a zero. The frequency of off-task behaviors for high referral teachers ranged from a low of zero to a high of 22. The frequency of off-task behaviors for low referral teachers ranged for zero to 17. The mean for off-task behaviors of teachers with high referral rates was 3.681 with a standard deviation of 3.837. The mean for off-task behaviors of teachers with low referral rates was 2.222 with a standard deviation of 3.143. The t-value was -3.406 with a p-value of 0.00076 (see table #3). Therefore, hypotheses 3 was supported. The teachers who used a higher percentage of indirect discipline techniques had 62% of their students on-task while teachers who used direct discipline techniques had only 38% of their students on-task.

Table #3

A Comparison of Off-Task Behaviors

	M	SD	N	t-score	p
Teachers Using Direct Discipline	3.68	3.83	135	-3.406	00076
Teachers Using Indirect Discipline	2.22	3.14	135		

$p < .05$

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to collect information regarding the direct and indirect management techniques employed by teachers to control inappropriate behavior and its relationship to high discipline referral rates. A second purpose was to investigate whether effective management techniques affected high student on-task rates.

The finding that there was not significant difference in the use of direct discipline techniques for teachers with high referral rates versus those with low referral rates was surprising. One would expect just the opposite. However, when an analysis of the direct discipline techniques used was conducted, it became obvious that teachers with low referral rates used more positive direct discipline techniques versus those with high referral rates (see table #4)

Table #4

A Comparison of Direct Discipline Techniques Used

	High Referral Teachers	Low Referral Teachers
Threatens to Punish	9	0
Uses Scarcasm	6	2
Uses Brevity in Correcting Behavior	13	3
Praises Good Work	9	15
Reprimands in Front of Class	8	8
Reprimands Privately	9	7

Teachers used the direct discipline techniques of reprimanding students in front of the class and reprimanding students privately evenly in both groups. However, teachers with high referral rates threaten to punish students and used scarcasm with a higher frequency

than teachers with low referral rates. Also, teachers with low referral rates praised the good work of students almost twice as often as the teachers with high referral rates. Teachers who are skillful in preventing problems use few negative consequences to correct student behavior. This supports research that indicates effective classroom managers have an emphasis that is positive and prescriptive rather than threatening or punitive (Alderman, 1997; Canter, 1996; Brophy, 1985).

Just as there was not a significant difference in the use of direct discipline techniques, nor was there a significant difference in the use of indirect discipline techniques for teachers with low referral rates versus those with high referral rates. When an analysis of indirect techniques was conducted, it became evident that teachers with low referral rates used those techniques that were again more positive in nature (see table #5).

Table 5

A Comparison of Indirect Discipline Techniques Used

	High Referral Teachers	Low Referral Teachers
Looks Directly at Student Without Saying Anything	1	7
Calls on Student to Re-direct Behavior	12	23
Pats on Back	2	5
Ignores Behavior	0	4
Proximity - Walks Close to Student	21	23
Shows Others Good Work	11	11
Uses Code to Post Misbehavior Student Corrects Behavior	4	5

Whereas both high and low referral rate teachers used proximity to the student, showed others good work, and used a code to post misbehavior consistently, low referral rate teachers looked directly at the student without saying anything, patted students on the

back, called on students to re-direct their behavior and ignored certain behaviors more often than teachers with high referral rates. Teachers with low referral rates seemed to have developed a positive and effective relationship with students through the use of positive direct and indirect discipline techniques that encourage personal responsibility, cooperation, and self-discipline. In contrast, teachers who based their relationships with students on fear or power encouraged disrespect instead of respect.

A breakdown of the off-task behaviors illustrated this point. Teachers with high referral rates had a higher percentage of students talking, sleeping, stalling and looking around versus teachers with low referral rates. Teachers with low referral rates had a higher percentage of students out of their seat or playing. Most students out of their seats, however, either went to the restroom or sharpen their pencil (see table #6).

Table 6

A Comparison of Off-Task Behaviors

Off-Task Behavior	High Referral Rate	Low Referral Rate
Talking	169	84
Out of Seat	56	65
Playing	17	32
Sleeping	33	21
Stalling	12	11
Looking Around	153	83

It is possible that teachers with high referral rates were not consistent in establishing limits and expectations. Students might not have known what was expected of them and what the limits were. Without knowing this, students would not have the opportunity to make choices within the guidelines of the teacher's management system (Dreikurs, 1968; Gordon, 1993; Canter, 1996; Alderman, 1997). Teachers with high referral rates, because

of their inconsistency, could have become frustrated and began to use referrals to the office as a resource. Decisions in discipline were made on the basis of frustration and feelings (negative emotions) rather than on goals. A discipline decision made in anger was often a decision made in error. Discipline problems escalated under these conditions. The teacher's goals should be either preventing a problem or de-escalating a problem (Dreikurs, 1968; Gordon, 1993; Canter, 1996; Alderman, 1997).

Limitations

There were several limitations that prevented this study from being significant. First was the high transient rate of the students. Several students that had caused problems in several classrooms withdrew from the school during the course of this study. This caused a possible change in the environment of the classroom. Second, even though the data indicates that there was an increase in referral rates for teachers who use direct discipline techniques versus those who use indirect techniques, the small sample of teachers studied did not allow for collection of significant information regarding the direct and indirect management techniques employed to control inappropriate behavior and its relationship to high discipline referral rates. Finally, there was an increase in the number of suspensions during the months of March and April. Students also had a tendency not to misbehave while the assistant principal was in the room. This could account for the high number of students who were looking around during the observations.

Summary/Conclusions

Classroom management has one of the greatest influences on school learning. A teacher cannot gain achievement unless they have the students' attention. Referrals are a symptom of a learning environment that does not work for either students or teachers. The misbehaving student is not the only one who experiences reduced learning through

disruptive behavior. The entire classroom is interrupted while the teacher stops to react to the disruptive student(s) and to write the referral.

Teachers that used positive direct or indirect discipline techniques created a positive and effective relationship with students, which in turn resulted in higher on-task behaviors. Certainly, the data indicates that there is an increase in referral rates for teachers who use direct discipline techniques versus those who use indirect techniques. However, due to the small number of teachers involved in the study the difference was not significant. Further studies with a larger number of teachers need to be conducted to determine if there would be a significant difference in the use of indirect discipline techniques for teachers with low referral rates versus those with high referral rates.

Appendix A

Teacher _____ Grade _____ Date _____ Time _____ *HR or LR

DIRECT TECHNIQUES

____1. Talks excessively about misbehavior
____2. Reprimands in front of class
____3. Yells at student
____4. Threatens to punish
____5. Assigns extra subject work
____6. Bangs book/ruler on desk
____7. Rips up paper and/or other work
____8. Publicly posts punishment for misbehavior
____9. Uses sarcasm
____10. Takes away gym, art or music
____11. Sends to office
____12. Moves desk by teacher
____13. Uses brevity in correcting misbehavior
____14. Reprimands privately
____15. _____
____16. _____
____17. _____

INDIRECT TECHNIQUES

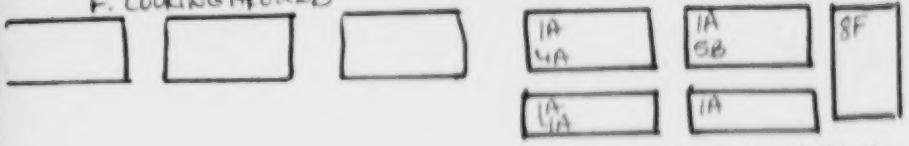
____1. Looks directly at student without saying anything
____2. Proximity - walks close to student
____3. Shows others good work
____4. Taps pencil on desk
____5. Gives happy face and/or stars
____6. Uses code to post misbehavior
____7. Pats on back
____8. Hugs student
____9. Winks
____10. Calls on student to re-direct behavior
____11. _____
____12. _____
____13. _____
____14. _____
____15. _____
____16. _____

* HR - High Referral Rate
LR - Low Referral Rate

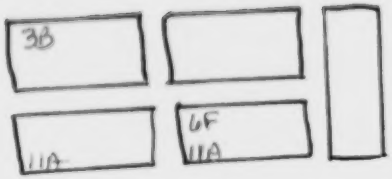
A. TALKING
B OUT OF SEAT
C. PLAYING
D. SLEEPING
E-STALLING
F. LOOKING AROUND

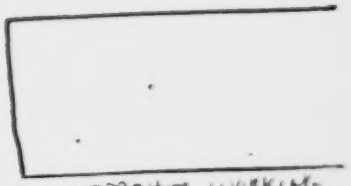
TIME
1. 8:30
2. 8:32
3. 8:34
4. 8:36
5. 8:38
6. 8:40
7. 8:42
8. 8:44
9. 8:46
10. 8:48
11. 9:00

4/15
WLR 1ST

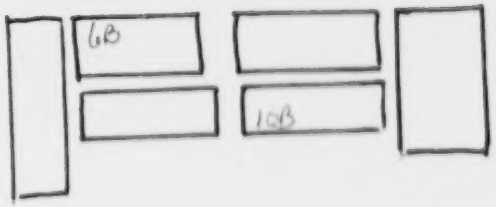


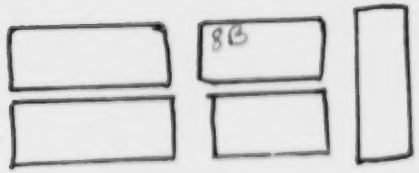
SUPPOSE TO BE READING SILENTLY

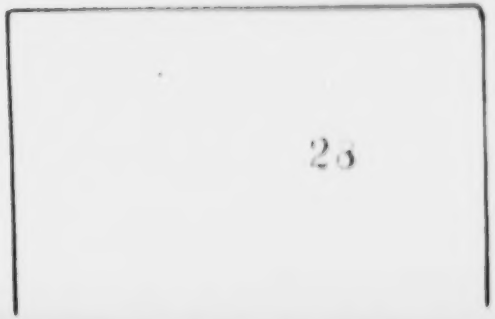


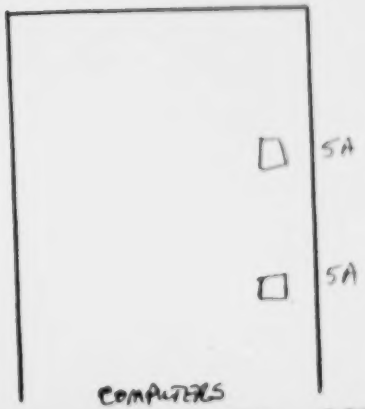


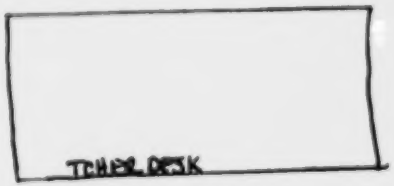
TEACHER WORKING WITH SMALL GROUP READING











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